The Victorian Bing Crosby Society

NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 1979

Hello again,
Here we are with our first major newsletter for 1979. Sorry that it's a little later than hoped, but better late than never! Hope that you like our new cover illustration. In the coming months, we hope to present a series of different pictures of Bing. Due to the fact that our newsletter is reproduced by the Xerox process it's necessary to present these old photographs in a stark black and white treatment, but I think that this gives them a quite distinctive look anyway.

This edition may end up being even larger than our effort of last November. In the following pages we'll be presenting a major article on the Bing Crosby Historical Society which has got off to a great start in Bing's hometown of Tacoma, Washington. There'll also be an article from Pat Sullivan of the Club Crosby in California plus news of an exciting new two LP set shortly to be issued in England.

But for now, let's start off as we always do with details of our future functions.

FUTURE FUNCTIONS

SUNDAY MARCH 18TH - FILM AFTERNOON - COLLINGWOOD EDUCATION CENTRE

Originally scheduled for Sunday March 4th, we've decided to move this function on a couple of weeks so as not to clash with a barbecue to be held on that date by our friends in the Frank Sinatra Society.

We have several films lined up for this Sunday including:
1. The 1949 Walt Disney cartoon feature "THE LEGEND OF SLEEPY HOLLOW" to which Bing supplied the narration and also several songs. Bring the kids along to this one and show them just how good animation can be.

2. The 1945 short "ALL STAR BOND RALLY" which was made for the War Activities Committee and the US Treasury Department. In it, Bing sings "Buy Buy Bonds" and makes an appeal on behalf of War Bonds. He is followed by Frank Sinatra who sings "Saturday Night" while Bing is seen peeping from the wings as if envious of Sinatra's talent. Other stars to appear include Bob Hope, Betty Grable, Harpo Marx, Jeanne Crain, Linda Darnell and Harry James and his Orchestra.

3. Although not a Crosby film, we will be showing, for interest, the rare 1929 short by the great Bessie Smith "ST LOUIS BLUES". Her only film appearance, this rare short was thought for many years to have been lost completely.

STARTING TIME: 2.00 PM SHARP.
VENUE: The Collingwood Education Centre, McCutcheon Way, Collingwood. You can park in either McCutcheon Way or Campbell Street and enter from that side of the building.
ENTRANCE FEE: Regrettably, we have had to increase the entrance fee from $2 to $2.50 per head for adults due to rising costs (Hall rental up from $10 to $30 for instance!) Children are now $1.50 a head but a family ticket (mum, dad and any number of kids will be $7.00. For people on a pension, the cost remains at $1 a head. Now Members : $3-50 per Head.

MUSIC EVENING - MONDAY APRIL 2ND - 7.30 PM - MOBIL CENTRE

Once again, a group of members will be presenting an interesting and unusual selction of Bing's recordings. Please, please, please try to arrive on time. We only have the hall until 10.30 so the earlier we can start, the more we can fit in. Coffee and biscuits (courtesy of Mobil) will be served at interval. Location, as always, is the Mobil Building theatrette, Mobil Building, 2 City Road, South Melbourne.

Future Music Evenings: We have booked the Mobil Centre on a regular basis for our music evenings during 1979 - in fact, the first Monday of every second month.
To be more precise: April 2nd, June 4th, August 6th, October 8th and December 3rd. You might like to make a note of these dates.

FRIDAY APRIL 20TH - DINNER AT BING'S RESTAURANT!!!

A couple of newsletters back, we told you of the existance of a restaurant with the unusual name of "BINGS". Thanks to member Clive Oliver, we now know that it is in fact a very pleasant place catering for 50 - 120 people. The most interesting piece of information is that Crosby records are played continuously as background music! I've rung to check whether the manager is a Crosby fan, but surprisingly, he's not. It seems that they took the name "Bing's" just after Bing had died because it seemed like a topical name for the place!!! Whatever the reason, Bing's Restaurant is obviously an ideal venue for us to hold a function, and therefore, we have booked a table for 30 people for the evening of Friday April 20th, starting 8.00 pm.

THE MENU is quite varied and reasonably priced. Typical items are King Prawn Cocktail ($3.80), Barramundi ($6.35), Sirloin Steak ($5.90), Chicken Kiev ($6.50), Strawberry Crepe ($2.80).

However, the menu is so large and varied that we have decided to leave the choice up to individuals. Bing's is BYO, by the way.

Address: Bing's Restaurant, California Motor Inn, 138 Barkers Road, Hawthorn.

How to book: For a start, you'd better hurry, as reservations are filling fast just through word of mouth. To assure a place, please send $5.00 deposit to the Secretary of the Social Committee, Thelma Wood, NOW, stating the number of people in your party. Thelma's address is: 47 Wingrove St, Cheltenham, 3192.

PAST FUNCTIONS

Three past functions to cover here - the most important being the two screenings of King of Jazz last November.

KING OF JAZZ REVUE - 19TH & 26TH NOV. 1978.

Although from an'artistic' point of view, the two evenings were a great success, financially, we didn't do nearly as well as we would have hoped. There were a number of reasons for this, one being, unpleasant as it is to say, being the poor support of the membership. Although more than two-hundred people turned up on each evening, the majority of these were outsiders. At the risk of sounding boring by repeating myself, if you want the society to continue, you must be prepared to support it.

That aside, those members who did turn up on both evenings had a great time. The first evening, Bernie Duggan, the well known bandleader, came out of retirement to lead a band for the first time in several years playing such old songs as "Lovable and Sweet", "I'm gonna sit right down and write myself a letter", "Would You", plus many others. Vocals were provided to several of the numbers by Janna McCurdie, Janet Stutley, Harry Price and Geoff Orr.

On the second evening, the music was provided by the New Harlem Jazz Band - a group who do a remarkable job recreating the sounds of the 20's and 30's - and particularly the vocal styles

"King of Jazz", as I've written about often in the past, is a remarkable movie that needs no extra comment here. If there is sufficient interest, we may screen it in place of one of our music evenings later in the year at the Mobil Centre. If we charge a small entrance fee, it may also help us recoup part of what we lost last year.

Music Evening - Monday February 5th

I'm happy to report that our first function for 1979 was very well attended - over 50 members turned up. In fact, it was our best-attended music evening ever. Music was provided by Jim Parratt who played a selection of Crosby records that reminded him of times and events past. Incidentally, Jim brought along his sister who had only just arrived from England. What a welcome to Australia! Other music was supplied by yours truly who played a selection of unusual items and by Thelma Wood who presented another of her inimitable music quizzes.
Probably the highlight of the evening, though, was the screening of two of Bing's Mack Sennett shorts "Blue of the Night" and "Sing Bing Sing". No matter how many times we screen these vintage films, it seems that people never get tired of them!

Barbecue - Sunday February 18th

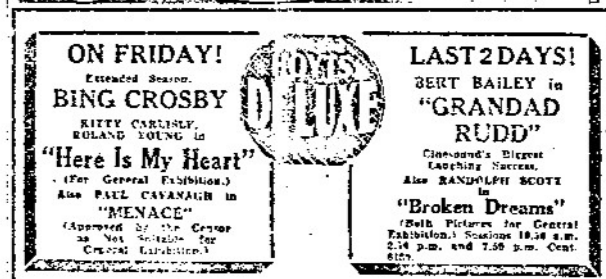
(Due to a last minute work function which turned up, yours truly was not able to attend the barbecue. The following report was kindly prepared by the President of the Social Committee, Geoff Orr)

This really turned out to be a superb day in a most relaxed setting at Ken and Betty Orren's home in Healsville. The beautiful scenery that surrounds their home made the day one of complete relaxation. I know that I relaxed, after a hectic month since Christmas. I found that the companionship was marvellous. The beautiful salads provided by the fair hand of Thelma Wood were most enjoyable only to be surpassed by those magical cakes that Betty makes. These were cakes that we saw for a split second and then were gone. Frank Wood needs virtually no mention for the famous tomato sausages he created and were a barbecue highlight as were the hamburgers and steaks. Frank also created another highlight - a specialty high flying act from Ken's balcony. The bruises are still coming out??? But forgetting the pranks for a moment, Frank does do an excellent job, not only supplying good meat, but spending a lot of his time cooking it. For someone who loves Tammy Wynette and does not care greatly for Mr Crosby's vocals, that certainly is a labour of love. (Love of what I don't know!) Ken Orren gave his all when preparing the music. Thank goodness it was in the early part of the day , because he was inebriated later on and was seen by a very reliable source sleeping with a flower growing out of his mouth.

A few people were unable to attend and sent their regrets: Bob Machliss and Keith Dorman and his wife. Jim McManus, Bill Bennett, Malcolm Cribbes and Les Saynor did a great job on the spinning wheel and Adrian Fowler collected entrance fees. After paying all costs, the day netted a good profit for the Society. Thanks again to Betty, Thelma, Ken and Frank because I know that we were not charged for a great majority of the food. Seeing that this is the first year as Social Club President for me it's nice to see these functions being supported as a lot of hard work and organization goes into them. Thank you to everyone concerned - Geoff Orr.

NEWS-PICTORIAL

Wednesday, May 15, 1935



THE NEED FOR A BING CROSBY SOCIETY.

(The following is an edited version of the editorial penned for the September 1978 issue of "Bingang", the magazine of the American Club Crosby, by Pat Sullivan. Because Pat sums up many of the thoughts that I have about our organization, I thought it well worth reproducing her comments here.)

I sense a growing paranoia growing that Bing will not be able to weather any criticism or that none should ever be tendered. This feeling comes mainly through correspondence and conversations with those who have followed his career from the beginning, rather than those who are joining our club nowand glowing with eagerness to hear material most of us have in the original. Being a graduate student in history, I find this "no criticism allowed" position untenable. The only thing I find unreasonable is that any longtime Crosby collector and admirer can seriously doubt history's final verdict concerning Bing's stature in show business annals. Granted, we don't like the criticism, because we loved the man in a personal way, but it all comes with the fame and the glory. He was human and he did have flaws and not all his recordings were gems. He is now an historical figure and will be studied and spoken about in a different way than when he was alive. But not to worry! Bing can handle it - surely we we should be able to do it with the grace he always exhibited with criticism!

(Pat then recounts the circumstances surrounding the death of Elvis Presley and the events that happened thereafter, and then continues:) Perhaps the circus surrounding the Presley death has shaken the Crosby admirers more than we realize. Vern Taylor, who wrote the touching memorium to Bing in our March journal, spoke to me recently and said that he felt interest in Bing was dropping off because his life exuded such a sense of fulfillment - everything accomplished, everything well done.

If that is the case, it is all the more testimony to his greatness and history's ultimate verdict. I personally think it is more than just a matter of age and numbers - many of Bing's fans have died or have gained a deeper sense of their own mortality as a result of their hero's passing. Presley's fans are still young and numerous and sense the loss of his passing as a tragic youthful loss rather than the loss of Bing following a glorious fulfilled life.

Let's cheer up and be grateful for the tie than binds us all as Crosby enthusiasts. Bing never gave up - surely we're not going to slink off into a corner and let him down now.

Bing didn't live like Presley nor die like Presley. We're Crosby people, so our style of mourning and carrying on and continuing to promote Bing is in the Crosby style. Like Bing, we're not strident. But were still here in droves and, if we see that his work is preserved and promoted, then we'll have fulfilled our goal.

So let's get on with it. Let the critics take aim and fire - they haven't got a chance. Bing was just too nice and too decent and too awesome a talent to ever come out anywhere but on top!

(If you'd like details on how to join the Club Crosby, drop Pat a line: 1301 Sheridan Ave, Apt. 96, Chico, California, 95926, USA)

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Last Christmas, the Victorian Society received a beautiful card from Kathryn and her family. Unfortunately, the colour photograph won't reproduce here, so for now we'll have to settle for the message inside:

We

Wish you Joy this Christmas

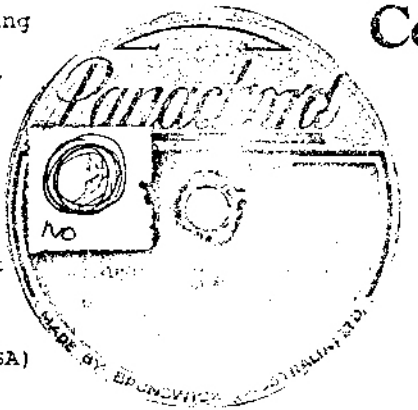
Happy Memories

and High Hopes for the future

Kathryn Crosby

Harry, Mary, Frances and Nathaniel

Collector's Corner



Starting off a new feature for the newsletter, we feature here for your interest a couple of more unusual Crosby labels. The first, on the left is as rare as the proverbial hen's teeth. It was issued right here in Melbourne by Coles Stores in 1931 and is one of only two known records by Bing to be issued under a pseudonym. The other (also issued on Panachord as by Owen Cornell) is "I'm Through with Love". Incidentally Coles, also released "Million Dollar at the same time on the Embassy label but gave vocal credit to one Arthur Beaumont! Strangely, there are one or two Embassy's around (different titles) released under Bing's name.

This second label looks like it could be a pirate issue out of either Taiwan or Hong Kong. Records by Bing on Japanese labels these days are quite common but I haven't seen too many on Chinese pressings.

Hard to put an age to the issue, but I'd guess early 60's. The record of course is one of Bing's sing-a-long LP's.

THE BING CROSBY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
P.O. BOX 6013
TACOMA, WASHINGTON 98406

Regular readers of these pages will remember that I have mentioned the Bing Crosby Historical Society on a number of occasions. Originally starting as an idea by a man named Ken Twiss who resides in Bing's hometown of Tacoma, Washington, the society has grown and developed rapidly. The following was supplied on request for a press release on the background of the organization.

Early in the Fall of 1977, Ken Twiss, a long-time fan and collector of Bing Crosby recordings, met with several friends to create the Bing Crosby Historical Society in Tacoma, Washington. His intent was to form a group that would build a permanent headquarters in Tacoma Washington to acquire the birthplace of Mt Crosby, which still stands across the street from the church where he was Christened. Plans included a public display of Crosby memorabilia, annual music and film festivals and observance of Bing Crosby's contributions to the world of entertainment. Although it was regrettably learned that the Crosby home is not available, plans were nonetheless implimented to make ready for acquiring the home sometime in the future.

On October 14th, 1977, the course of the society's own future was changed drastically when, following his hugely successful appearances in England, Bing Crosby suddenly died on a golf course in Spain.

Now a memorial society in everything but name, the group met to re-examine their future plans. It was felt that the most fitting tribute to Bing's memory would be to continue the efforts

to make Tacoma a place where Bing's admirers throughout the world would look to for recordings, photographs, films, books and other information about the man who has been described as the greatest entertainer in the history of popular music in America.

The Bing Crosby Historial Society was registered as a domestic corporation in the State of Washington on April 20, 1978, and on October 23rd, was granted tax exempt status as a non-profit organization permitted to solicit donations to further its progress.

On the first anniversary of Crosby's death, the Tacoma Public Library mounted an impressive display of sheet music and related Crosbyana. The Pierce County Commissioners issued a resolution, and a Proclamation was issued by the City of Tacoma honoring Bing's contributions and his memory. The Society has received dozens of letters supporting its aims. Included are letters from Kathryn Crosby, Washington's Governor Dixy Lee Ray, US Congressman Norman Dicks, and many other prominent citizens who support the efforts of the society.

With this modest beginning, the Society now plans to organize a public event in May 1979, as close to the date of Bing's birthday as possible, to feature well-known local people, a nationally-organized personality as keynote speaker, films, recordings and other data, much of it never before made public. This will be the first of a series of annual events the society expects to initiate.

We encourage your requests for information about the Bing Crosby Historical Society, and welcome your donations, whether large or small. Feel free to write (to the address featured at the beginning of this article).

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This clipping, supplied by Ken Twiss, appeared in the Tacoma News Tribune on Oct. 16th, 1978.

DER BINGLE — The late Bing Crosby, Tacoma-born, will be honored with a special exhibit of memorabilia Oct. 9 through Nov. 9 in the Fireplace Room of the Tacoma Public Library. Crosby died a year ago this month. Page A-9.

Well, I think that Ken and his friends deserve our wholehearted support. If you would like to have copies the Historical Society's prospectus, the articles of incorporation of the society, some newspaper articles on Ken (some of which are reproduced later in this newsletter), drop me a line and I'll forward you Xerox copies.

The Society has the following office bearers:
President: Ken Twiss
Secretary: Quentin Rinehart
Treasurer: Arleigh Jones
Honorary Board: Howard Levine
Dame Vera Lynn
Bob Machliss (and a great honour it is)
Frank Murphy
Patricia Sullivan
Vernon Wesley Taylor

FUND RAISING AUCTION.

To raise funds for the Historical Society, a special auction has been organized which will run from January 1st to July 4th. In other words, you may submit more than one bid for the same item over this period if you feel that your initial bid was too low. Items to be auctioned include many rare records, books, etc. For details, write direct to Jimmy Johnson, 1307 Dinwiddie Ave, Richmond, Virginia, 23229, USA. If you like, though, I can supply you with a Xerox copy of the lists supplied to me. (B.M.)

NEW RECORDS NEW RECORDS NEW RECORDS NEW RECORDS NEW RECORDS NEW

*New Release: Bing Sings Songs of the Islands MCA MAPS-8847

The third in the series of MCA's 20-track Crosby LP's, this one features a selection of Bing's Hawaiian records from the 1930's and40's. Most of the tracks have appeared on LP before although there are two or three that have never been reissued. Worth havin

Exciting new release due out soon in England!!!

As you probably know, Ken Barnes, the man who produced Bing's last half-dozen LP's has been negotiating to purchase the radio tracks recorded by Bing with the Buddy Cole Trio in the 1950's. The great news is that the first two-LP set is due out in England in April and that the tracks have had modern orchestral backings added.

Titles: Straight down the middle, try a little tenderness, Yes si
.that's my baby, Moonglow, You're the top, Don't blame me, Nice
work if you can get it, I guess I'll have to change my plans, Whe
or when, Love is the sweetest thing, True love, Ain't misbehavin'
Misty, You're sensational, So rare, Red red robin, Manhattan,
Unchained melody, Keepin' out of mischief now, All through the ni
I can't get started, I wish you love, Please don't talk about me,
How long has this been going on, Way down yonder in New Orleans,
You'll never know, Count your blessings, They didn't believe me,
I've got a crush on you, Lady is a tramp, Just you just me, When
baby smiles at me, The tender trap, She's funny that way, Little
you've had a busy day, At sundown, Loves old sweet song.

According to Ken Barnes, issueing of subsequent LP's (and 4 other are planned) will depend on sales of the first set. We don't kno yet whether the first set will be issued in Australia or what label it will be, if it is, but if you can't wait, you might like to order direct from: Dave Carey's Swing Shop, 1b Mitcham Lane, Streatham, London, SW 16, England. Obviously if it is released in Australia, the place to go is Ken Henderson's Bentleigh Sewing and Record Centre, 350 Centre Rd, Bentleigh. Society members get 10% discount there.

ANOTHER LP TO LOOK FORWARD TOO!

Within a few weeks, our friends at the Sinatra Society will be issueing a special LP which will be made available to all of our members. It features two of Bing's radio shows from 1954 in which Sinatra guest stars. I believe that the first was recorded the week before Sinatra won the Academy Award for his performance in "From here to eternity" and the second one the week after. Should be well worth having. No exact date of issue available yet, nor exact price. Probably around $7 - $8. Definitely a great item to swap with collectors overseas. If you'd like to reserve a copy (or copies), perhaps it would be wise to drop me a note now. Don't send money though. I'll let you know when.

TWO OLDER LP'S WORTH HAVING

In case you missed them the first time round, two of Bing's LP's from the late 60's have bobbed up at Coles Supermarkets and K-Marts on the imported American Pickwick label. There's "Hey Jude, Hey Bing" and "Thoroughly Modern Bing" - both from 1968 and both at the very reasonable price of $2.65 each! I think that one or two tracks may have been deleted but I'm not sure.

THE MASTER'S COLLECTION
You may have noticed the original of this poster in record shops in recent months. It features 22 of Bing's LP's available on MCA. We're reproducing a miniature version of the poster here for your interest.

CHRISTMAS TV SPECIAL

It seems like every other State in Australia except Victoria saw this special. Wonder why we missed out?

Bing is still the only Crosby

AT this time of year it seems un-Christian, uncharitable and positively Scrooge-like to say anything unkind about a special in which Bing Crosby eases his way through "White Christmas."

Nevertheless it has to be said: The most striking thing about Channel 9's "Bing Crosby — the Christmas Years" show on Tuesday a the outstanding lack of talent of the younger Crosby children.

Of course there are no complaints about Bing's easy-on-the-ears contributions but, unfortunately, his efforts are intercut (and undercut) by offerings from wife Kathryn and children Harry, Mary Frances and Nathaniel.

The one-hour special is new — it was first screened only a week ago in the United States — and it is by way of being a family tribute to Bing who died in October, 1977.

Its format has Kathryn and the children gathered for Christmas and looking back through tape and film clips of Bing's many Christmas TV shows.

Among the clips we are treated (and it is a treat) to Bing's one man musical "The State versus Santa Claus" from the 1974 show, in which he sings all the characters, and to a two-Santa routine with Jackie Gleason from the 1976 one.

★★★★

And, most movingly, to a medley sung with David Bowie recorded in London only five weeks before his death, for his "Merrie Old England" Christmas special.

Much of the programme is taken up with clips from the family's appearances on various Christmas shows.

We see an intent 11-year-old Harry doggedly plink-plonking his erratic way through a guitar backing to Bing's "Christmas Song."

We see Mary Frances as a lanky 14-year-old Christmas fairy gallumphing through a ballet routine.

"Oh, how embarrassing," says the older, more critical Mary Frances watching it, "I was awful"

She is right. She was awful; but still the special is a good-natured unstable show and probably proves that even a parent as talented as Bing fondly sees all his geese as swans.

Our address for all correspondence is, as always:
P.O. BOX 422
SOUTH MELB.
3205.

Library to display Crosby memorabilia

Tacoma-born Bing Crosby will be honored with a special exhibit of Crosby sheet music, album covers and other memorabilia Monday through Nov. 9 in the Tacoma Public Library.

The display is in memory of Crosby's death, Oct. 14, 1977.

Pierce County commissioners plan to pass a Crosby resolution at their Oct. 10 meeting, and Tacoma Mayor Mike Parker will issue a Crosby proclamation Oct. 18.

THE EXHIBIT will consist of approximately 20 pieces of sheet music that were interpreted by Crosby, about 20 album covers from 1934 to the late 1950s, a selection of records donated to the library in 1951 by Kenneth Twiss, a signed photograph of Crosby and assorted documents of Crosby memorabilia.

Twiss, who donated his record collection to the library, has incorporated as a Tacoma organization, "The Bing Crosby Memorial Society."

He is president of the organization. Arleigh Jones, a trust officer of the Seattle First National Bank's Tacoma office, is treasurer, and Gerald Rinehart, office manager for the Children's Industrial Home, is secretary.

Twiss, 66, who lives at 6814 S. G. St., is a retired chef.

EARLIER, he tried, unsuccessfully, to obtain funding for the Bing Crosby birthplace at 1112 N. J St. But he learned that the present owners, the Morey Abbott family, have lived there about 30 years and have no interest in selling their home as a "Crosby museum."

Twiss now plans through his society, to obtain another building to house items relating to Bing Crosby.

The society, however, has not yet obtained approval as a non-profit corporation from the Internal Revenue Service.

Among the Crosby memorabilia owned by Twiss are copies of the "Bingville Bugle," from which Crosby got his name of Bing.

The Bingville Bugle was a page of cartoons and stories published by the Spokane Spokesman Review between 1907 and 1911.

Crosby, who left Tacoma at an early age, was reared in Spokane, and the feature was a particular favorite of his.

IN MEMORIUM

It is with deep regret that we note the passing of well-known Melbourne collector, Jack Forehan. Jack had been a member of our Society since the early days and was liked and respected by all. On your behalf, a card has been sent to his widow.

Before we end, I'll just mention a couple more Crosby societies that may interest you. The first is The International Crosby Circle which issues a magazine quarterly. They also have for sale a 'mini-discography' which lists all of Bing's records in chronological order. For details, write to: Reg Bristo, 7 Green meadow Close, Cwmbran, Gwent, NP4 3NR, U.K.
The other group publishes a magazine called "Bing Pictorial" and offers a photo and tape selling service. For details, write to Frank Murphy, 32 Ferndale Ave, Wallsend, Tyne & Wear, NE 28 7NE, U.K. Guess there's no more room for anything else. See you at the next function.

Bob Maehler